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# Engineer Update

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## 'I really wanted to assist...'

### Under new law, retirees can be re-hired to work during emergencies

By Bernard Tate  
Headquarters

"So what do you plan to do when you retire?"

A common question as one approaches retirement, and the answer is often "Take it easy," or "Travel," or "Enjoy my grandchildren," or "Spend more time on my boat," or "My wife has a long honey-do list."

But for some retirees of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers the answer is, "Deploy to a disaster area and work really hard."

The Corps' Re-employed Annuitants Cadre (RAC) gives retirees the chance to come back to work temporarily during disasters or other situations that require a "surge" of personnel. (The technical term for a retiree is annuitant.)

#### Wanted to help

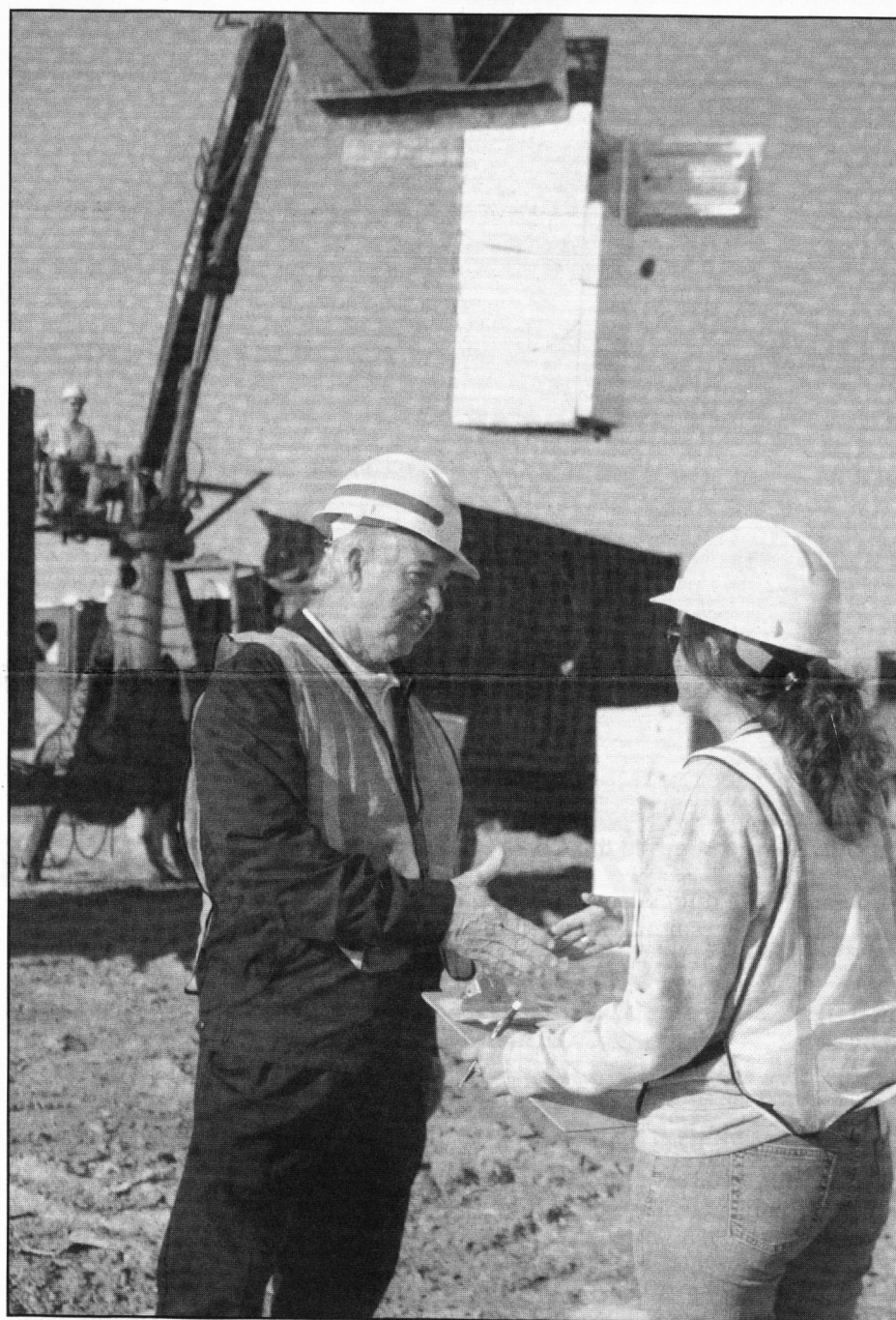
"I really wanted to do something to assist the victims of the hurricanes. When I found the Corps needed volunteers, I asked to come back on board," said Pat West, who retired from the Humphries Engineer Center Support Activity in 2003. West is the contact for people in other Army agencies who volunteer to work with the Corps in the hurricane disaster areas. "The Corps has great people, and they'll do whatever it takes to get the job done. But you can't ask them to spread themselves too thin, and the RAC is a great way to get more people to help."

#### Great need

Bringing retirees back as temporary hires is something that the Corps had been trying to get off the ground for a long time, but it took an act of Congress and 2005's historic hurricane season to make it happen.

"We've been pursuing a program like this for years," said Ed Hecker, Chief of the Homeland Security Office. "A number of senior management had commented in critiques and after-action reviews that it would be nice to use our retirees to resource some of the surge requirements that we have during major disasters."

"First, our retirees are a great asset," said Don Binder, the Emergency Program Manager, and a re-employed retiree himself. "Second, many of them had experience dealing with disasters when they were full-time employees. And third, every retiree we deploy is one less permanent Corps



**Chester Ashley, a retiree re-hired to work as the Debris Area Engineer of the Louisiana Recovery Field Office, meets Elizabeth Raiford, a quality inspector for a civilian company, at the Gentilly Landfill in New Orleans. (Photo by Frank Martin, Louisiana Recovery Field Office)**

employee we have to deploy. Our retirees can either deploy directly, or can backfill for a full-time employee who is downrange."

"As our missions expand under the National Response Plan, and as we look at the expeditionary force that we're developing under the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Campaign Plan, we need to use our work force to meet the needs during an emergency, and still accomplish our primary missions in civil works and military programs," Hecker added. "Our retirees were one clear area where we could develop a

contingency workforce."

#### Act of Congress

The biggest sticking point preventing this idea from getting off the ground was paying the retirees if they came back to work — anything they earned was subtracted from their retirement pay dollar-for-dollar. But Public Law 108-136, part of the National Defense Authorization Act of FY04 changed that. It states "This statute requires annuitants employed in a position within the Department

of Defense...to receive their full salary and full annuity."

Their health benefits and life insurance is still covered under their civil service retirement. They can also accrue sick leave and annual leave if their appointment is continuous rather than intermittent. "But most of our of our retirees are working in response to an emergency rather than in full-time positions, so most won't accrue leave," said Julie Blanks, the Civilian Deployment Program Manager.

#### Hurricane Katrina

Hecker was already directing a group of people, including Binder and Blanks, to develop the RAC program last spring and early summer, but Hurricane Katrina really started the ball rolling.

"I got an e-mail from Headquarters just after Katrina hit that said, 'When can you get here?'" said Binder, who has a background in both human resources and emergency response. "I called the next day, which was Sunday, and I came in Monday."

"I've committed to make sure this program is handled so that managers downrange get quality people, and the individual retirees are treated the way they deserve to be treated after a career with the Corps," said Binder.

Last spring and early summer, letters went out to 6,500 people who had retired in the past five years. About 750 wrote back and said, "Yes, I'm interested."

"But then Hurricane Katrina hit, and when we asked them 'OK, are you really interested?', the number dropped to about 225," said Binder.

#### Requirements

There are now about 500 retirees in the Re-employed Annuitants Cadre, and more than 250 of them have deployed to the hurricane disaster areas so far. The requirements to join the RAC are fairly simple.

"Basically, you have to be retired," said Binder. "There's no time limit on when they retired, except if they went out on a VSIP, then they're barred from re-employment for five years."

"There's certainly no age limit," Binder continued. "There's a medical requirement, just like for all our employees who deploy, whether it's after a hurricane, or another type of disaster."

Continued on page eight



## Insights

# New chaplain assigned to Corps

Article By Col. Sherrill Munn  
Chaplain, U.S. Army Corps of  
Engineers

Photo by F.T. Eyre  
HECSA

As the new chaplain for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, I want to take this opportunity to introduce myself and my wife Mary Ann to you. Mary Ann, the love of my life, and I are thrilled to be a part of the great USACE team. As soon as friends and acquaintances heard that I was coming to USACE, I heard nothing but positive comments. I was told many times that I would love the Corps, that it's a great place to work, that the people are wonderful.

That showed me the outstanding reputation the Corps has earned. So, we come with a lot of excitement and great expectations, and we're thankful to God for bringing us to this place at this time.

**Early years.** I was born and raised in Oklahoma, so yes, I'm a "Sooners" fan.

I spent my senior year in high school in Ventura, Calif., and stayed in California to go to college when my parents moved back to Oklahoma. How do you keep 'em down on the farm after they've seen the California beaches?

For the next 10 years, I followed the education trail from coast to coast. I remained in California for a Master of Arts, then on to Kansas City for a Master of Divinity from Nazarene Theological Seminary, and, finally to Boston University where I earned a PhD in Biblical Studies. My parents were happy when I finally became gainfully employed.

I pastored a church for three years in Massachusetts, then moved across country to take a position as a college professor in Idaho. When I did, I thought I had realized my professional goal to teach at a college or university, to write books and learned papers, and all that neat stuff.

**Chaplaincy.** However, God had different plans for me. I once heard someone say, "If you want to see God laugh, tell Him your plans." A major turning point in my pilgrimage occurred in 1979 when I joined the Idaho National Guard as a chaplain. In the next few years, I felt the continued tug on my heart to pursue the chaplaincy full time.

Finally in 1983, I relented and followed God's lead, and the rest, as they say, is history. God knew better and I have been blessed beyond measure



Lt. Col. Sherrill Munn is the Corps' new chaplain.

to be an active duty Army chaplain for about 23 years now, endorsed by the United Church of Christ.

My career has been quite varied and interesting. My muddy-boots time was spent with the field artillery, armor, and mechanized Infantry.

I once asked a tanker why he chose that field. He replied, "Why walk when you can ride?"

Similarly, a field artillery command sergeant major told me he that he chose field artillery when he figured out that he could shoot big bullets from far away instead of small bullets up close. We have some smart soldiers out there.

**Different assignment.** I got a different assignment at Army Materiel Command where I set up the materiel development program for the Army Chaplain Corps. They sent me to the Intermediate Acquisition Course to prepare for the job. The learning curve was steep, but the job was rewarding.

From there, I went to Korea as the

Deputy Chaplain of Eighth Army and U.S. Forces Korea. While there, I was blessed to complete the U.S. Air Force Air War College, something else out-of-the-ordinary for Army chaplains.

I came to USACE from beautiful Deutschland, where I served as the 6<sup>th</sup> Area Support Group Chaplain, and then Installation Management-Europe Region Chaplain.

Along the way, I was greatly blessed to be able to serve and minister to the wonderful Soldiers, civilians, and family members of our great Army. I was privileged in Korea and Germany to be a pastor for members of our sister services and their families as well.

**Family.** However, the greatest blessings have been my son, daughter, five grandchildren, and especially my wife Mary Ann, who also gave me three wonderful stepsons and a beautiful daughter-in-law.

As I think of Mary Ann and my family and all they mean to me, I am reminded that St. Valentine's Day is this month. This day has added sig-

nificance for Mary Ann and me because our first date was on Valentine's Day.

On Valentine's Day, we celebrate our love for those special people who give us meaning and purpose and brighten our lives. Too often in our society, we equate love with emotional feelings. Loving feelings are good and make us feel warm and close. However, feelings are fleeting; they come and go. Unless our love is built on a firm foundation, it will wane and even go away altogether.

**Hesed.** The Bible gives us that firm foundation that allows our love to last and persevere through good times and bad, joy and sorrow, the mountain peaks and the deep valleys.

That foundation can be expressed in two important words from the Bible. The first is Hebrew from the Old Testament, *Hesed*, which means "covenant faithfulness."

It speaks of God's commitment to His covenant with the people of Israel. It means God is completely trustworthy and will never betray the covenant He has made. It means God can be relied upon, will always be there, and will hold His word with complete integrity.

**Agape.** The second word is Greek from the New Testament, *Agape*, which means "love," but a special kind of love. It is a love that always seeks the best for others. It is an unselfish love that reaches out to help those in need, without expecting anything in return, except to know one did the right thing. It is the love we see in the story of the Good Samaritan.

It is, above all, the love God shows us in reaching out to us with salvation. Both of these words speak of God's love for us. We are reminded in the Bible that, since God so loves us, we ought to love one another like God loves us (1 John 4:11).

This St. Valentine's Day, let's love those special people in our lives as God loves us. Let's build our relationships on *Hesed* and *Agape*, so that they will be strong and endure, no matter what life may throw at us.

When we do this, we fulfill God's command to love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

(The opinions expressed in this article are those of the writer and do not reflect the official policy or opinion of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.)





## Commentary

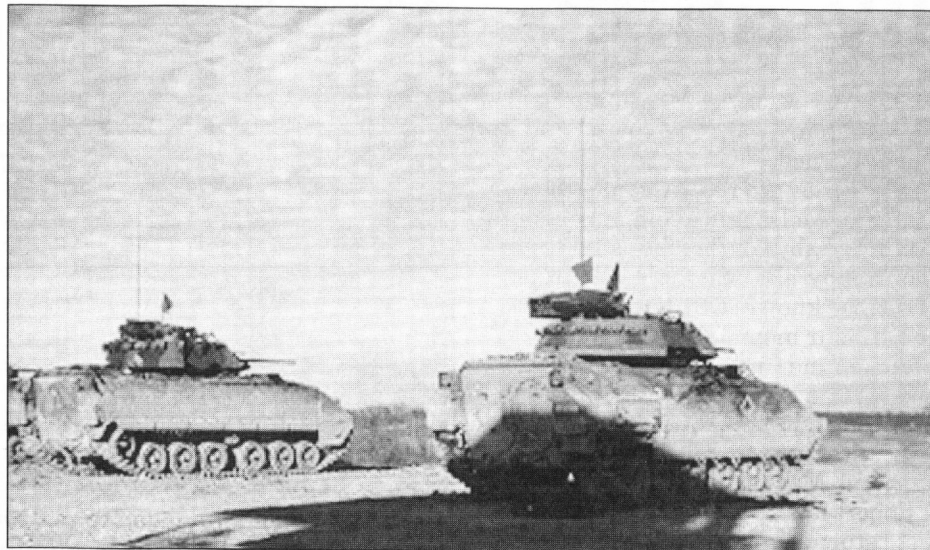
# Engineers build modern world, future

By Donald Basham  
Headquarters

The engineering profession will celebrate National Engineers Week Feb. 19-25. Founded in 1951 by the National Society of Professional Engineers, National Engineers Week is designed to increase public awareness and appreciation of engineering, and to celebrate a profession that connects us to people, places, and things around the world. We travel by air, land, and sea. We look inside the human body and galaxies. Engineers help make all these modern miracles possible.

Engineers help connect us to our past, manage our present, and define our future. They're designing the products and systems making our world cleaner, safer, healthier, and more comfortable. Times have changed, but engineers' ability to think creatively and solve problems remains. We engineer simple materials, much like common sand and clay, into technology miracles like ceramic hips, 3D models, and fiber optic cable. The computer has become a basic tool for everyone, from designing the latest bridge to finding information for a homework project.

I encourage engineers of all disciplines to participate in National Engineers Week. Activities such as demonstrations and presentations at local schools; organizing field trips for students to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



**M-2 Bradley Fighting Vehicles at Fort Knox, Ky., fire their 25mm cannons on a range built for them by Louisville District. This is just one of many ways that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers helps keep America safe. (Photo by Justin Dodge, Fort Knox)**

projects; providing exhibits and demonstrations in cooperation with local shopping malls, libraries, and science centers; and participating in MATHCOUNTS and Discover "E" are just a few ways we can significantly contribute to making National Engineers Week a success.

Engineering makes up the second largest profession, behind only teaching. In a way, we engineers are teachers. Throughout the centuries, engineers have used their creativity and problem-solving skills to benefit our

country, and indeed all of humankind in many ways. I believe engineers will make even greater contributions to the nation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

However, we face what I consider to be a disturbing trend of few graduating engineers. Long before students are ready to make life-long career decisions, middle school students often must make academic choices that can steer them away from engineering, the sciences, and advanced technology.

"We are losing our future scientists and engineers around the junior high

school years", said a national study, "An Analysis of Current priorities and Guidelines for the Future." "Less than 15 percent of U.S. students even have the prerequisites to pursue scientific/technical degrees in college."

Many of these students simply do not see how technical skills sets could translate into meaningful benefits for themselves or society. They are no idea how involved engineers are in such fields as medicine, the environment, transportation, manufacturing, and entertainment.

As engineers, we have an obligation to help ensure that we have sufficient new engineers and other highly skilled workers coming along to take our place and lead the Corps in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I challenge every engineer to be engaged and involved in some manner throughout the year, but particularly during National Engineers Week. Take this opportunity to contribute to the future of the engineering profession. It is our professional responsibility to make sure that the next generation has the math and science skills necessary to take on the challenges that lie ahead.

*(The opinions in this article are those of the writer and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.)*

## Decon gear tested in CRREL cold room

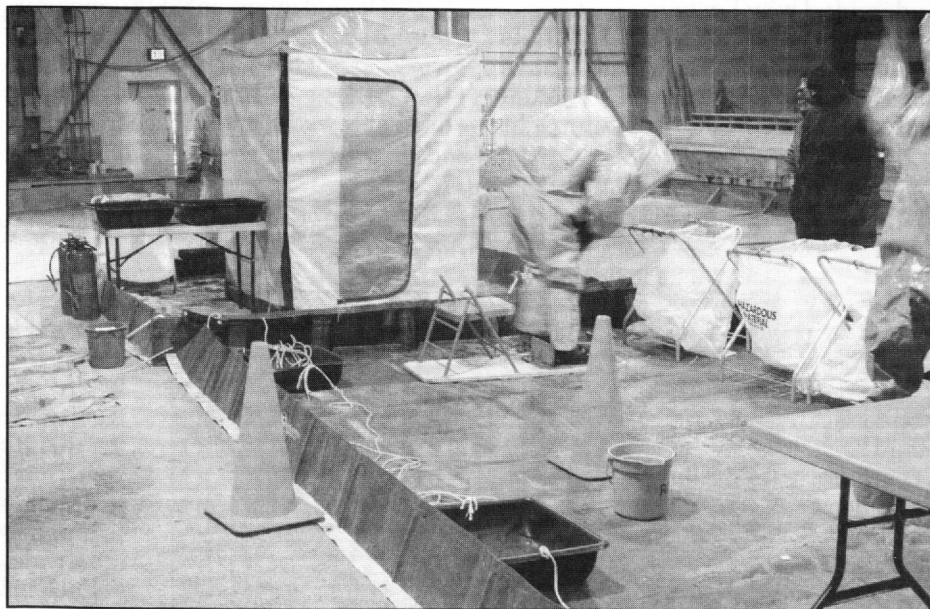
Article by Marie Darling  
Photo by Leonard Zabilansky  
Cold Regions Research & Engineering Laboratory

A dozen Massachusetts National Guardsmen and Fort Leonard Wood Testing and Evaluation Group members came to the Cold Regions Research & Engineering Laboratory (CRREL). They wanted to use the Ice Engineering Research Facility to test decontamination (decon) equipment in a cold environment.

Today, not only are Soldiers faced with a multitude of hazardous situations including chemical warfare, but civilians face those threats, too. As more civilians deploy to high-threat areas, they face many of the same threats that Soldiers do, including chemical warfare, or hazardous materials (HAZMAT).

"The Soldier needs to be confident that the system works, whether it's in a warm or cold climate," said Randy Weiss, with the Operation Test Command at Fort Leonard Wood. "This is our responsibility as part of the chemical detachment of the National Guard."

The Fort Leonard Wood Evaluation Team is composed primarily of retired military, and the Guardsmen are on full-time duty. They know the fears and dangers associated with this type of re-



**A test and evaluation team member exits the decontamination shower and removes his footgear. The room temperature is 20 degrees below zero.**

search, and they have intimate knowledge of their customer, the Soldier.

Plunged into a room the size of a football field refrigerated to minus 20 degree Fahrenheit, the decon team set up a standard personnel decontamination line. It includes a hut for showering off the contaminant, an inspection area where the Soldier is scanned with a wand sensor to detect residual chemi-

cals, and an interim area to shed the Soldier's protection suit, and then into the second hut to don civilian clothes.

The tests run in one-hour cycles and the equipment includes water heaters, generators, batteries, and lots of hoses. The test equipment was set up in the cold room and monitored for failure.

Most of the equipment is not designed for 24 hour operation in the cold. One

of the earliest findings was the need for cold-friendly fittings. In a cold environment even the thinnest gloves will interfere with certain manual tasks.

But the idea is not to replace the equipment, but enhance its cold performance. When the system fails; the team identifies the problem and either fixes it with a change in operation, or re-engineers the equipment.

"We're learning important things, like an AA battery will last maybe 10 minutes in a zero degree cold room. Cold really drains the power," Weiss said. "Even tents are hard to wrap around a metal frame. And these are things you can learn only in a cold environment."

And beyond the equipment failures, the team commented that working in CRREL's cold room is cost effective. They don't have to haul everything to Alaska and set it up. The cold room is controlled and stabilized, so tests are repeatable — even in Alaska it can warm up and interfere with a test.

"These guys are doing a great job. They're dedicated to their mission and realize the importance of the tests for Homeland Security in a cold environment," said Leonard Zabilansky, the CRREL engineer who hosted the decon team and oversaw the facility operations during the testing.



# Mom & sons make Iraq a family affair

By Angela Dickson  
Engineer Research &  
Development Center

The thought of Christmas Eve conjures up images of singing carols, making last-minute gift preparations, eggnog, and mistletoe.

But for Vickey McDonald of the Construction Engineering Research Laboratory, Christmas Eve was quite different, but just as memorable, as she watched her son, Craig, re-enlist in the Army in Taji, Iraq.

"This has made my Christmas a special one this year, especially being away from family and friends State-side," McDonald said.

Sgt. Craig McDonald is an avionics technician working on AH-64 Apache attack helicopters with the 3rd Infantry Division. McDonald herself recently returned to Iraq herself to serve a second one-year assignment for the Gulf Region Division, and she thought coordinating the attendance at the ceremony might be impossible.

But when Sgt. McDonald confirmed his plans to re-enlist, Vickey obtained permission to attend, and the Taji Resident Office assisted her with a place to stay. She obtained a space on a flight and landed just an hour before the ceremony.

"It was great — the Army, Corps, 3rd ID, and the district's support in letting me go just leaves me speechless," said McDonald. "Our leadership over here really walks the walk. They're here for you as much as you're here for them. I was with Craig when he enlisted initially, and this was icing on the cake. I couldn't have been more proud."

But why on Christmas Eve?

"No real reason," McDonald said. "His company was redeploying and it just happened."

While they *did* receive some ribbing from Sgt. McDonald's company about "Mama's baby boy," Vickey said Craig was happy she was able to attend. "Truth be known, we *all* would like to be with our mom," she said.

Vickey and Craig spent their Christmas with a nice dinner, shopping at the post exchange, watching a movie, and were able to call back home to husband, Mac and oldest son, Robert.

Robert has also worked in Iraq, and just returned to the U.S. from service in Kirkuk, where he was a civilian contractor for LSI, up-armoring HMMWVs and working on their diesel engines.

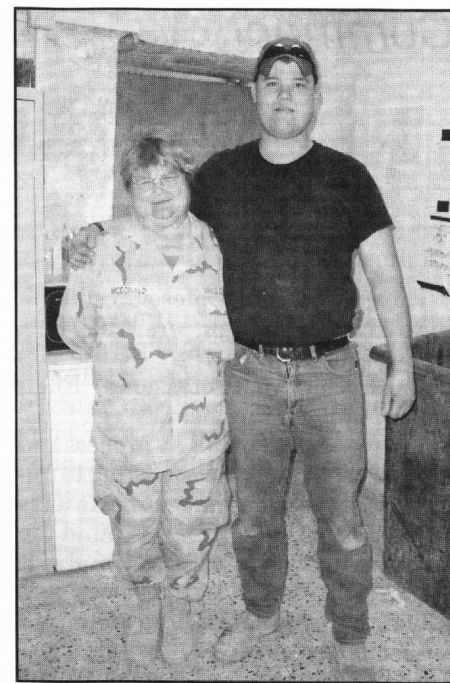
While Robert was in Iraq, Vickey visited Kirkuk on a maintenance visit, and wanted to visit Robert. Officials said they would try to locate him after dinner, but while McDonald was at the salad bar, her son was standing right there.

So mother and sons made serving in Iraq a family affair, and made time in their hectic schedules to visit.

"Having both sons over here caused me worry — I can't lie about that," McDonald said. "But they both had missions to do and have served the nation, the Army, and Iraq to the best of their abilities."

Her sons, however, do not like their mom serving overseas. "They would rather me be home with their dad," McDonald said. "But like me, they understand why I'm here."

"People have their own thoughts about why we're here, and I have mine," McDonald continued. "I volunteered because I believe in our fight



Vickey McDonald managed to get together with both of her sons while they were all in Iraq. At left she is with Craig in Taji after his re-enlistment in the Army, and at right with Robert in Kirkuk.

against terrorism. I believe in our young men and women in uniform. If there's anything I can do to assist them while over here or assist at all, then I'm going to do it. I believe that the Iraqi people need the assistance to make their life better than what they had under Saddam."

McDonald noted that Americans can say and do just about anything we desire without fear of repercussion — from practicing our religion to speaking out against our government, president, or other government officials.

"In Iraq, people would get knocks on the door and never be seen again just on a whim from Saddam or one of his officials," she said. "We have clean water and sewage treatment facilities — we can drink and eat when we want. Can you imagine watching your kids or grandkids play in sewage? I can't."

McDonald appreciated the opportunity to see first-hand the Corps' hard-working Soldiers and Civilians in action in Iraq. "Bringing electricity, drinkable water, and sewage treatment

plants into operation — it's like seeing all the theory put in practice," she said.

McDonald provides information technology support for the Anaconda Area Office on her second assignment. "Over here, we do everything from setting up computers to installing VSATs (very small aperture terminal), and anything in between," she said. She will be deployed this time until November.

McDonald also credits all those back home for their support. "Everyone helps each other," she said. "We couldn't do our job over here without those back home — from cards and care packages to picking up our duties to calling our spouse to see how they're doing. Everyone helps, and it means a lot to us, and to me personally."

"I'd like to thank everyone who has been there for us," McDonald said. "More important, we're doing the right thing helping the Iraqi people. I know we can't do everything, but I truly believe the Iraqis want to help themselves to a democratic life, and we're assisting them in making it happen!"

# Woman-owned businesses thrive in GRD

Article and Photo  
By Denise Calabria  
Gulf Region Division

While dirt-covered construction workers toil to rebuild Iraq's decimated infrastructure, an Iraqi-born woman more accustomed to basic black with pearls is busy building a different type of foundation for women in Iraq. Her work may take place out of the limelight, yet she is determined in her endeavors and dedicated to realizing her goals.

Azza Humadi is the Women's Issues Coordinator for Gulf Region Division (GRD). Through the GRD's work, funded with Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund money, many Iraqi women-owned businesses have been successful in the Iraq reconstruction efforts. Humadi contributes to this accomplishment, and has assumed the lead in establishing an Iraqi women's database with more than 200 registered, women-owned businesses.

She meets regularly with 250 Iraqi women's organizations and other non-government offices to enhance women's participation in Iraq reconstruction. She also hosted a series of three successful Contracting Outreach Conferences and two round-table meetings for



Azza Humadi, GRD's Women's Issues Coordinator (right), meets with Dr. Azhar Al-Shakhly, Iraqi State Minister for Woman Affairs.

women during 2005. The word spread about the Outreach Conferences, and participation rose from 120 at the first conference to more than 400 at the third.

"Traveling out to the Red Zone isn't easy for me or anyone else, but you can't expect people to support and believe in you if you don't show that you are willing to take risks for them," said Humadi. "I don't believe I can remain in the International Zone if I want to network and develop strong relationships. Seeing the Iraqi women face-to-face in their own envi-

ronment makes a huge difference. They want to see how you look and think, and not only via e-mail."

Due to targeted efforts in the past year, more than 250 Iraqi women-owned businesses have vetted contracts with GRD for reconstruction work, representing about \$200 million of construction and non-construction contracts. The contracts range from full-scale engineering design and construction of buildings, to digging wells, to supply of construction and office materials, to custodial services.

Each month, women-owned businesses compete for and earn about 15 new contracts in Iraq, a pattern of slow-but-steady progress. Iraqi women are 61 percent of the country's total population and Humadi believes that Iraqi women should be both participants in and beneficiaries of Iraqi reconstruction activities.

"This is why we have a special program to facilitate the involvement of Iraqi women-owned businesses in the reconstruction," she said. "In addition, we want to assist the capacity development in Iraq's Ministry for Woman's Affairs with internship programs and special training. We'd like to see more women in business, as well as operating their own businesses and taking leadership positions. These programs will help Iraqi women become financially independent."



# Center manages 9,000 radio frequencies

By Bernard Tate  
Headquarters

Wireless communications are vital in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers day-to-day work. Dredge crews and lock-and-dam operators use maritime systems for ship-to-shore communications. Park rangers use radios to keep in touch with each other, with park headquarters, and with other federal, state, and local agencies. Data collection platforms talk to satellites, and surveying systems transmit data between pieces of equipment. Microwave links interconnect many types of systems, and our labs use radio frequencies in R&D projects.

And of course emergency operations and disaster response always need radios, especially last year during Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma.

In fact, in any given year the Corps has 9,000 to 10,000 systems that use radio frequencies. Getting authorization to use those frequencies, and knowing when and how to use them, is the mission of the Engineers' Spectrum Center (ESC) in Pittsburgh District.

Greg Formosa is the ESC Program Manager, and his staff is Joe Petitt, Tom Jenkins, and Ross King. In addition, this team also provides direction, guidance, and assistance to about 40 frequency managers in districts and facilities throughout USACE.

**'License plate.'** "You have to get authorization to use a radio frequency," said Dan Troyan, Chief of the Civil Works & Military Programs Cell, Corporate Information Directorate. "The National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA) is the approving authority. It's a detailed, rigorous approval process because there are only so many frequencies to go around. With so many people wanting to use those frequencies, you've got to have a method so there's not constant interference."

The Communications Act of 1934 designated part of the radio frequency bands for use by the federal government, and other portions for public use. The public frequencies come under control of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The act gave the president authority to manage the frequencies in the federal spectrum, and he has delegated that authority to the Department of Commerce, which created the NTIA. The NTIA is the FCC of the federal government.

"These radio frequency assignments are like the license plate for an automobile," added Troyan. "You have a car, but you need a license plate to operate that car on the public roads. You have a radio, but you need an authorized frequency to use that radio."

**Long process.** Corps frequency managers must access the USACE Spectrum Server to submit their updates to the ESC for review. "This process used to be managed by the Corporate Information Directorate in Headquarters, but there's a lot of operational work in dealing with all those frequencies," said Troyan. "So in August 2004, we established a Memorandum of Understanding between the Corporate Information Directorate and Pittsburgh District establishing the ESC to support all the Corps folks who use radio frequencies."

The ESC helps field offices initiate and submit requests for new frequency assignments and for frequency assignment renewals. The ESC reviews these requests and forwards them to the Army Spectrum Management Office (ASMO) at the Hoffman Building in Alexandria, Va. If ASMO approves the request, they forward it to NTIA for final approval.

"And there are always changing USACE requirements and NTIA regulatory changes that must be continually addressed to ensure retention of the frequencies," said Formosa. "Each frequency authorization is granted for five years. Before expiration, the



Corps employees use radios every day for a wide variety of tasks. At left Corrine Hodapp, a ranger at Eau Galle Park, keys the mike on her walkie-talkie. At right, Terry McMaster communicates with a towboat locking through Lock and Dam 4 on the Monongahela River. (Left photo courtesy of St. Paul District, right photo courtesy of Pittsburgh District)

local frequency manager must submit a renewal proposal addressing any changes – Is the frequency still needed? Have there been any equipment, antenna, or tower changes? The ESC assists the field with this process. If the renewal proposal is approved, it is sent back down from NTIA as an official USACE frequency authorization good for another five years."

The ESC's mission is not as expensive as one might think, considering the work involved, and the importance of radio frequencies.

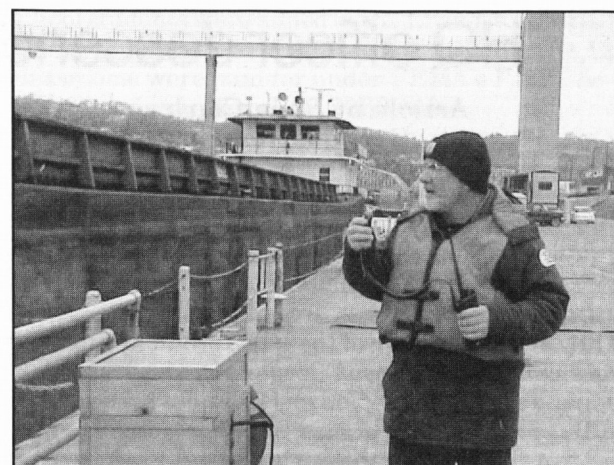
"We don't have to pay for the frequencies, but we pay for processing the requests to get them," said Troyan. "And that's just for the normal civil works missions. When a disaster occurs and emergency operations begin, and radios are moving from place-to-place in a disaster area, you've got all this extra checking and authorization to use frequencies, and that adds to the cost. I estimate that the cost for Fiscal Year 2006 will come to around \$225,000."

**Hurricane use.** The Corps' use of radio frequencies became critical during last year's hurricane season, especially for Hurricane Katrina. About 99 percent of the Corps' radio frequencies are used for civil works missions. The remaining one percent is used by the labs and for emergency response. There are 18 high frequency (HF) and eight very high frequency (VHF) bands designated for Corps' use during contingencies anywhere in the U.S. They are activated locally by the Corps when there is a disaster.

"FEMA must follow the same process," said Formosa. "So does the Navy, Department of Justice, and so on. They all have contingency frequencies. Dan's analogy of a license plate is a great one, but there's another critical parameter that should be mentioned. If your car were licensed like a radio frequency, your license would be good only for a specific area. You would only be permitted to drive within a limited radius. As you can imagine, the approval complexities increase exponentially when you have emergency teams on the move."

**Restrictions.** Even though federal agencies, including the Corps, have frequencies for emergency use throughout CONUS, the NTIA does not allow any frequency to sit idle for the 99 percent of the time when there is no emergency. As the electromagnetic spectrum becomes more crowded with new wireless technology (cell phones, personal data assistants, wireless networks), efficient use of the spectrum becomes more critical.

"If we move into an area during an emergency, the ESC must quickly review the confidential Government Master File data to identify other users and potential interference issues," said Formosa. "Then we submit a proposal to the NTIA, essentially saying 'We're here, and we now need to communicate.' The NTIA does a



quick review and says we can do that, and tells us if there are any restrictions.

"For example, as our Deployable Tactical Operations Systems (DTOS) teams moved in after Hurricane Wilma, we submitted requests to NTIA to use our emergency frequencies, and found that Kennedy Space Center was also using one of our contingency frequencies for its daily operations," Formosa continued. "So NTIA told us, 'You're authorized to use these frequencies, but don't use 'Frequency A' within 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) of Kennedy Space Center.' We had to quickly get the info about the restricted areas out to the DTOS teams by e-mail and voice contact."

**NORTHCOM.** The ESC's coordination requirements don't end with the Army and NTIA. They must also coordinate with other federal agencies.

"Ever since Sept. 11, 2001, NORTHCOM at NORAD has been tasked to manage disasters that occur on the U.S. mainland," said Formosa. "We knew Katrina was coming, but it brought us a requirement we've never had before. When Katrina hit, for the first time all federal agencies had to obtain their frequency authorizations from NORTHCOM, which monitors all communications in the disaster area. Each agency had to identify, *quickly*, its radio systems in the New Orleans, Vicksburg, and Mobile areas, and cite every radio transmission source. From the ESC database of frequency authorizations, we promptly identified 450 USACE systems, submitted the information to NORTHCOM, and readily received approvals for radio transmissions."

"In fact, our new procedures, implemented on the basis of lessons learned during Katrina, brought improvement," said Formosa. "Our approval response times dropped from days in Katrina to hours for Rita and Wilma. This allowed the Corps to be the first of the federal agencies in the disaster areas to receive authorizations for radio frequency use."

**Continuing needs.** And it's not over, because the hurricane recovery missions will continue.

"The proposals to use the radio frequencies in the affected areas are only temporary, and are not to exceed one year," Formosa said. "We'll track the need for radio frequencies throughout that time. Come the end of that year, if they're still needed, we'll re-submit for an extension so our teams can continue to use those frequencies in the disaster areas."

The ESC operates quietly and invisibly behind the scenes, much like the frequencies they manage. They coordinate, track, and support all aspects of the USACE wireless infrastructure, and ensure that vital communication needs are met.

"The radio spectrum is a limited, vital natural resource," said Formosa. "Proper management of this resource is critical to the USACE mission."



# The Fightin' Gridleys

## HQ officer descended from first Chief of Engineers and Navy hero

Article by Rena Clark  
Headquarters

Photo by F.T. Eyre  
HECSA

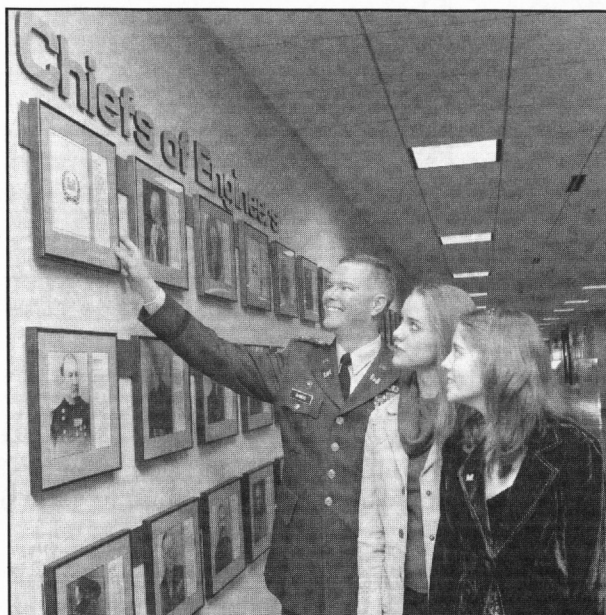
Along the long central hall in Headquarters, rows of framed photos line the wall, each one highlighting one of the 50 former Army Chiefs of Engineers. They are a reminder of the long, proud heritage of service of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which began serving the nation in 1775.

But for Lt. Col. Thomas Sands, a special assistant in the Headquarters Command Staff Group, they are a reminder of his personal history. On his mother's side, Sands is a descendent of the Army's first Chief of Engineers, Col. Richard Gridley, who was appointed to the position just after Gen. George Washington took command of the Continental Army.

Sands was seven when he first learned of Gridley. "My mother took my brother and me to Bunker Hill and showed us a plaque with his name on it. She told us about his contributions, constructing defenses on Breed's Hill, and directing the construction of fortifications around Boston, which forced the British to evacuate in 1776."

Sands is proud of his ancestor. "He had to have been a rebellious old cuss. He broke from the British army where he had been well respected, and chose to stand with the colonies and fight for independence. It was a huge risk that affected the entire family and put them in danger. He wasn't fighting in a faraway land, this happened where they lived."

Sands, a 1989 West Point graduate, said his



**Lt. Col. Tom Sands shows his daughters Lauren (center) and Dianne the biography of their ancestor, Col. Richard Gridley, the first Chief of Engineers.**

Gridley heritage didn't influence him to join the Army, or to become an engineer. Part of his inspiration came from his father, a Vietnam War veteran and later an environmental engineer in the private sector.

In fact, Sands said, it wasn't until last summer when he arrived to work for Lt. Gen. Carl Strock, the 51st Chief of Engineers, and saw that gallery of

commanders from Gridley to Strock, that the significance of his personal heritage hit home.

"I was walking down the hall on first day I arrived and saw the frame with Richard Gridley's name and description," said Sands. "His significance really hit me then, and I felt a real sense of pride and inspiration."

Sands said he also feels a sense of obligation and humility because the Gridley line has been traced back to 1066, when his ancestors invaded England with William the Conqueror.

Another noted relation is Admiral Charles "Steve" Gridley, who became part of American Navy lore during the Spanish-American War.

In 1898, Gridley was a captain and commander of the frigate *Olympia*, the flagship of Commodore Dewey's Navy squadron. When Dewey called out "You may fire when you are ready, Gridley," to begin the Battle of Manila Bay, the phrase became one of the most famous in American Navy history.

"I guess we've always been up for a fight in the Gridley family," Sands said.

Sands, who previously served in Iraq with the director of the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office, said he believes Richard Gridley would be particularly proud of what engineers are accomplishing today, especially in Iraq.

"I'm always inspired when I walk past his plaque, but it occurred to me that he would be inspired by today's engineers," Sands said. "He took a great risk to fight for freedom, and that's what we're doing today, for Iraq. I think he would have embraced the mission we have, and would be proud we aren't losing sight of our objectives."

HR Corner

## NSPS delayed, will begin next April

According to a plan released by Department of Defense on Jan. 19, DoD has revised its timeline and delayed efforts to bring the National Security Personnel System (NSPS) to more than 60,000 civilian employees in March. Instead, the new personnel system will be implemented for a much smaller group of employees across DoD in April. A phased implementation for the remainder of the employees covered by the NSPS will begin in October.

### Simplifying

In a memorandum to NSPS program managers dated Dec. 23, Mary Lacey, Director of the NSPS Program Executive Office, stated that more time was needed to focus on simplifying the design of the performance management system, getting performance management objectives right, and ensuring the system is simple, clear, and understandable.

This decision was made in part as a result of lessons learned from the new Senior Executive Service performance management system, which was used for the first time last year. A team of managers and human resources professionals from across DoD began meeting in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 11 to work on the suggested changes. The effort is expected to take more than a month, and collaboration with union officials will be a key part in the revision.

Due to the change in the implementation schedule, the only Department of Army employees who will be covered by NSPS in April are those employed by the Civilian Human Resources Agency.

### Corps response

In the Corps, Southwest Division and South Pacific Division, which had long anticipated being among the first group to be covered by NSPS, will now be in the next wave of coverage in October.

While the delay represents a significant change to the implementation schedule, it gives the Corps more time, and an opportunity to refine command policies associated with the coming changes. DoD Implementing Issuances and Army Issuances (policies for the new system) give major commands some latitude for making decisions about aspects of NSPS that require customization based on an organization's structure or culture.

The Corps is taking advantage of this time to make sure all the pieces are in place for a successful implementation when the time comes. A cross-functional team from Corps districts and divisions formed in late 2004 to assist the NSPS implementation. They meet regularly via teleconference to work through the details of the new system.

### Pay pool structure

One of the most challenging tasks faced by the Corps is creating a command-wide pay pool structure. A pay pool is a term for organizational elements, units, or other categories of employees that are combined for the purpose of determining performance payouts at the end of the annual performance rating period.

Under NSPS, employee performance will be reviewed annually by a panel of management officials

who will make a recommendation to a senior manager who serves as the final approval authority for each appraisal and associated performance pay.

While much of the work on this has been done, a final list of options will not be completed until DoD completes its revisions to the performance management system. The final decision regarding pay pool structure will be shared with all employees once the command has determined the best option.

Another challenge faced by the Corps is the classification of positions covered by more than one pay band. One of the most fundamental changes made by the new system is a pay banding structure to replace the General Schedule. NSPS abolishes the 15 General Schedule pay grades and replaces them with three broad bands of pay in five broad career groups.

In some cases bands overlap and decisions must be made regarding placement of employees into the appropriate band and career group upon their transfer into the new system.

### Major revisions coming

NSPS brings with it major revisions to performance management, compensation, staffing and classification, workforce shaping, labor relations, and appeals. The new system will provide the flexibility and agility to better respond to our missions and recruit and reward team members who go above and beyond the call of duty.

For more information on NSPS, visit the Department of Defense NSPS website at <http://www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/>.



# Around the Corps



Dr. James Houston, Director of ERDC, receives the Presidential Rank Award from Francis Harvey, Secretary of the Army. (Photo courtesy of ERDC)

## Presidential Rank Award

In a ceremony at the Pentagon on Jan. 20, Francis Harvey, Secretary of the Army, presented Presidential Rank Awards to 22 senior civilian employees. Harvey presented the awardees pins and a framed certificate signed by President Bush.

Five of them received the gold Distinguished Presidential Rank Award, including Dr. James Houston, Director of the Engineer Research & Development Center. Houston transformed seven independent laboratories into a single award-winning center providing critical support to the Global War on Terrorism. He led the development of innovative technologies to support warfighters, installations, environmental quality, and water resource development.

The gold pin award includes a lump-sum payment of 35 percent of the employee's base pay.

## Lewis & Clark Center

State-of-the-art features will make the classrooms of the new Lewis & Clark Center training facility at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) in Fort Leavenworth, Kan., one of the premier military learning centers in the world. Construction was 50 percent complete in December, and Corps project managers say the project is on budget and on schedule.

Bill Gross, project manager, said technology for the center is tested in a model classroom in the CGSC's Eisenhower Building. Then the concepts move to a test classroom in the center. If it works there, it is then planned for the 96 classrooms.

"The whole idea is to catch things early and, once it is proven, expand it to the other 96 classrooms," Gross said.

"We work in 'staff groups' of 16," said Lynn Rolf, Director of Education Technology at the CGSC. "The staff groups are split into groups of four officers. If we give the groups an assignment, they can move the desks to reconfigure the classroom. Each small group will have its own white board and full access to its computers. The computers also have access to the full battle-command network, so these officers are working with some of the tools they'll see after graduation."

Gross said some innovations, such as a large video screens, are obvious. Others are more subtle.

"Those are cable trays," Gross said, indicating mesh troughs above a ceiling. "These trays make it easier to repair cables or replace them. They're under the raised floors too, and you can run new cable a lot faster than in an old-fashioned classroom."

Rolf said representatives from universities have toured the Lewis & Clark Center seeking ideas. "We're trying to set the standard for classroom design," he said.

The \$106 million Lewis & Clark Center is on sched-

ule, and is set for completion in December. It will replace Bell Hall, a 1958 structure slated for removal in 2008.

## Competitive sourcing

Source Selection Evaluation for the Information Management/Information Technology competition continues, and a performance decision is anticipated by March 2. The Finance Center data entry function competition closed on Jan. 10, and the Directorate of Public Works competition closed on Jan. 12. Source Selection Evaluation is the next phase for these two competitions.

The Deputy Commanding General notified the Assistant Chief of Staff for Installations & Management that the planned competition for the Operations & Maintenance of Locks and Dams activity is postponed until FY07.

## Fort Bliss

"If you build it, he will come," whispers the voice in *Field of Dreams*. Fort Worth District hears a different voice whispering, "They're coming, so you better build it fast."

The district will build facilities for about 19,000 Soldiers returning from overseas to Fort Bliss, Texas. As part of the Army's Transformation, a division headquarters, four Brigade Combat Teams, and a Combat Aviation Brigade will make Fort Bliss their home. They will need headquarters and administrative space, dining facilities, aircraft hangars, arms rooms, storage facilities, and barracks.

Five other Corps districts (Sacramento, Albuquerque, Tulsa, Little Rock, and Galveston) will join Fort Worth in a new Product Line Support approach to accomplish the mission. Each district is responsible for a product line.

Fort Worth will handle infrastructure, barracks, and training ranges, plus be a central point of contact and coordinate activities of the other product line districts; Albuquerque District, company operations; Galveston District, ammunition storage and parking; Little Rock District, dining facilities and aircraft hangars; Sacramento District, brigade and battalion headquarters buildings and unit storage; and Tulsa District, maintenance.

"Besides sharing the workload, this approach also builds expertise, which should save time savings and institutionalize lessons learned," said Robert Morris, Jr., Base Realignment & Closure program manager for Fort Bliss.

## Temporary classrooms

Twelve temporary buildings have been delivered to Livingston School District. Three of the modular buildings are at Walker High School. Five other schools in Livingston Parish also received classrooms to house students from New Orleans dislocated by Hurricane Katrina.

"It's going to take a long time to build the brick-and-mortar schools, but the activity inside these temporary buildings is the same," said Randy Pope, the school district superintendent. "We're rebuilding lives first and buildings second."

"These buildings are tangible evidence that conditions are getting better, and the recovery is progressing," said Col. Charlie Smithers, the Louisiana Recovery Field Office Commander. "No one knows that better than the students and teachers who are here as a result of the hurricane. They lost all the things the rest of us take for granted — homes, schools, cars, and families or friends. It is our hope that the work here, which is the result of the dedication of many people, will help return some normalcy to their lives."

Nearly 700 elementary, middle school, and high

school students were added to the Livingston Parish school population soon after school began. The 12 classrooms were paid for under FEMA's Public Assistance program for about \$960,000.

## Mirror coating facility

Honolulu District has awarded a \$4.6 million contract to San Juan Construction, Inc., for the design and construction of a Mirror Coating Facility at the Maui Space Surveillance Site (MSSS) at Haleakala, Hawaii.

The facility will support the Advance Electro-Optical System telescope at the MSSS. The two-story facility will feature a one-story high-bay building with a metal roof. Science and technology labs in the facility will be built to support the Air Force technical staff, plus additional storage space for large mirror handling equipment.

The district, with the Air Force Material Command, is building the facility for the Air Force Research Laboratory.

## Cleaning up Iraq

Reconstruction in Iraq is more than restoring dilapidated infrastructure. It includes waste clean-up.

There were reports of containers lying in a field in Mosul. Some were steel drums neatly placed on wooden rails, others were plastic cans all in a jumble. These, together with other questionable items, generated a contract to mobilize the Nawroz Company to remove and clean up the spill. No one knew how long it had been there.

About 100 containers of hazardous waste, plus one boiler with miscellaneous parts, were removed. This waste material went to Marez for disposal.

A Stryker patrol from Forward Operating Base Courage provided security during the operation. (The Stryker is a wheeled armored vehicle that is new to the Army inventory, and in wide use in Iraq.)

"These types of projects, though seemingly small, send a visual message that things are getting better," said Lee Kenderline of Gulf Region Division, who had contractual over-watch of the project.



## CW5 promotes son to WO1

CW5 Charles Stephens promoted his son, Brian, to WO1. (CW5 is the highest warrant officer rank; WO1 is the first.) WO1 Stephens graduated from the Warrant Officer Candidate Course at Fort Rucker, Ala. on Jan. 19, and is now in the Electronic Missile Systems Maintenance Technician Basic Course. CW5 Stephens is the Logistics Chief Warrant Officer in the Directorate of Logistics. (Photo courtesy of CW5 Charles Stephens)



# Re-hired retirees

Continued from page one

ter," said Binder. "They do a self-evaluation, a doctor screens the information, makes a medical judgment, and lets us know if the person is deployable."

"Other issues are mostly administrative," said Binder. "There's a packet of forms that we send them electronically. They send us a copy of their Standard Form 50, Notification of Personnel Action for their retirement, a copy of their resume, several other forms that we provide, plus the medical form. That paperwork comes here, and we make a skills assessment comparing their background to the Corps' needs. If they're someone whose experience the Corps can use, we turn the information over to the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center here in Headquarters. CPAC works with the Civilian Personnel Operations Center to actually bring them on the rolls."

"The admin process is just mind-boggling," said Binder. "CPOC and CPAC have been a tremendous help; we couldn't have done it without them. We've also gotten a lot of help from Humphreys Engineer Center Support Activity, and from the retirees themselves."

## Quality assurance

Although all retirees are welcome in the RAC, some skills are urgently needed.

"We need basically two groups of people," said Binder. "The Corps gets six kinds of missions from FEMA. Ice, water, and temporary housing are short-term missions, and therefore are often handled by the permanent workforce. The other three are debris, roofing, and temporary housing, and those missions go on a lot longer. The majority of what we need for those are quality assurance people. We've had great success with former blue collar employees from the waterways, locks and dams, park workers, along with construction representatives, and engineering technicians. They've had experience in the field, so we've found them to be the best quality assurance people, no matter what the mission is."

"And the second group of people we need is a conglomeration – engineers of all types, real estate specialists, accountants, logisticians," said Binder. "Those are the typical former white-collar or office employees that we deploy to staff the offices and supervise the quality assurance workers."

## No time limit

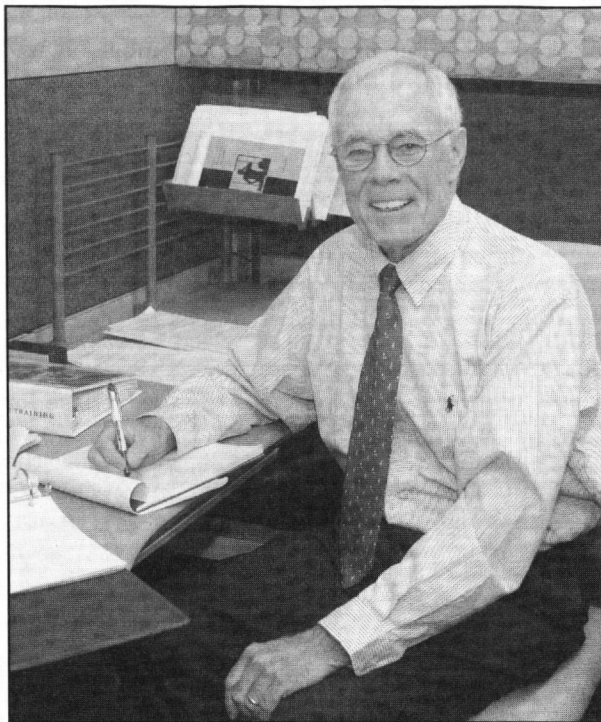
"The length of their deployments works the same as for most of the permanent work force, but with a difference," said Binder. "The retirees deploy for 30 days. During that time, they and whoever they work for make a judgment about the duration of the mission, and then about whether the individual wants to stay, and whether management wants them to stay. If the mission is ongoing and the retiree wants to stay, it's strictly between the re-employed annuitant and whoever they work for, unlike a permanent employee who must ask their district."

## "No frustrations..."

The reasons that people leave a comfortable retirement and return to work are as varied as the retirees themselves.

"I never wanted to retire, but I had a lot of personal things going on," said Don Chapman, who retired from the Directorate of Real Estate in Headquarters. He now helps deploy people to the Gulf Coast. "When I got that e-mail, I responded and said 'Yes, I'm very interested.' I love working for the Corps of Engineers."

"This work is wonderful," Chapman continued. "All the things that were frustrating when I was in



Don Chapman is a retiree who came back to work at Headquarters to help deploy people to the hurricane disaster areas. (Photo by F.T. Eyre, HECSA)

the permanent workforce – being responsible for so many programs, and upper management not showing those programs the interest I thought they deserved – those frustrations aren't here. I'm deploying people to an area that needs them, and I feel that my contribution is appreciated. So it's great being back."

## "I owe the Corps a debt..."

"I retired Jan. 4, 2004, and leaving the Corps was one of the hardest things I've ever done," said Jim Taylor, who retired as the Public Affairs Officer of Sacramento District. "I returned on Oct. 22, and it was one of the *easiest* things I've ever done."

Taylor came out of retirement because "I owe the Corps a debt that I'll gladly repay for the rest of my life. Every day during my 30-plus years with the Corps, I had the chance to grow professionally and personally. I really missed the challenges and the opportunities to make a difference that we have in the Corps. The day I showed up at New Orleans District, I felt like I came home."

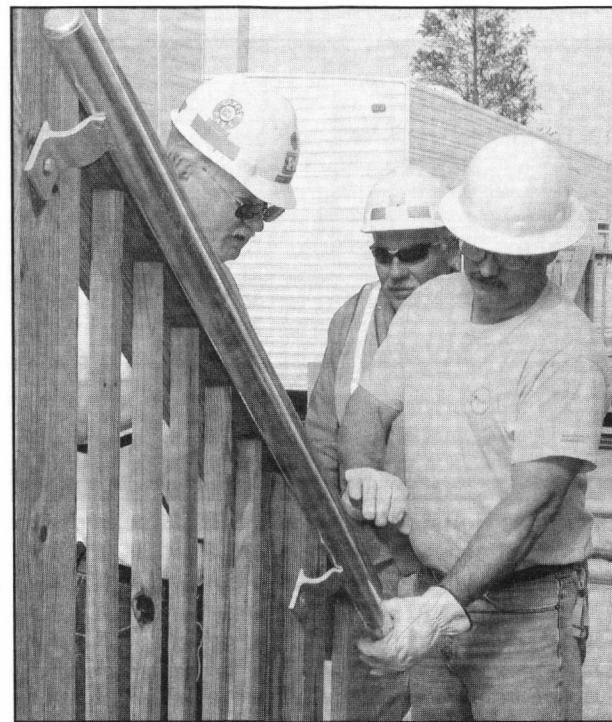
Taylor is the Public Affairs Officer of Task Force Guardian. "We're working to help New Orleans and the nation understand the Corps' effort to rebuild their hurricane and flood protection system," said Taylor. "Before people can decide if they're going to return, they need to know if they'll be safe. Part of our job is to make sure they have the information they need."

"It's news media central here," says Taylor of his job. "We talk to more reporters in one day than most of us do in a month back home. Public Meetings R Us, too. We're aggressively meeting with community groups of all sizes to tell people how we're rebuilding the hurricane protection system so they can decide if they want to rebuild their homes."

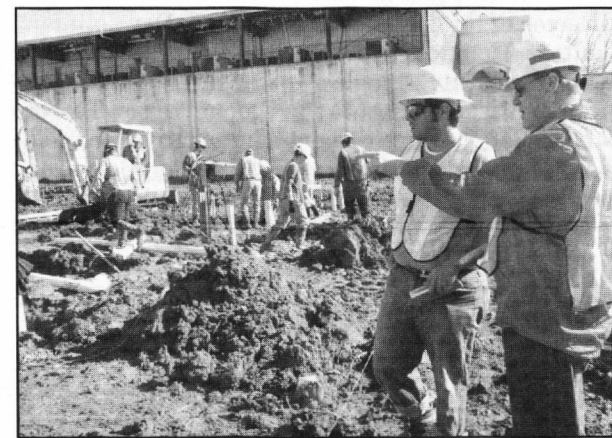
"I plan to stay as long as I can help," said Taylor. "I'm grateful for the opportunity to work with such caring, helpful, dedicated, and smart people. I hope to stay until we get the levees back to their pre-Katrina levels in June."

## "When you work, you stay young..."

"I never actually sat down when I retired," said Maxine Bailey, who retired as the Payroll Liaison at Waterways Experiment Station. She's back in Vicksburg District, keeping timesheets for those de-



Arne Thomsen (left), a retiree re-hired to work in Louisiana, watches as contractors install a handrail on an evacuee's temporary home. (Photo courtesy of the Louisiana Recovery Field Office)



Dick Sundberg (right), a retiree hired to work in Temporary Facilities in the Louisiana Recovery Field Office, and Leon Perret, a civilian contractor, look over the new 118-unit trailer village being built at the Greater Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church in East Baton Rouge. (Photo by Frank Martin, Louisiana Recovery Field Office)

ployed in the hurricane region. "I became an ordained minister, I'm a hospital chaplain, and I've visited Africa and India on mission trips. I also managed a 130-unit apartment complex, so 12-hour days are nothing new to me!"

"I think that when you work, you stay young," Bailey continued. "If you enjoyed working for the Corps before, you'll enjoy it now. They take good care of us. I feel like I'm an asset, because when the regular employees come down, they have to go home in 30 days. I can stay as long as they need me."

## Professional but relaxed

And those who work with the re-employed annuitants are also pleased.

"They're extremely professional and bring a lot of experience," said Bob Anderson, Public Affairs Officer of the Louisiana Recovery Field Office. "And they have a more relaxed attitude. They're professional and focused and productive, but they have the maturity and experience to be relaxed about it."

(Federal retirees who are interested in the Re-employed Annuitant Cadre can contact the program manager, Don Binder, at (202) 761-7099, or e-mail him at [don.binder@hq02.usace.army.mil](mailto:don.binder@hq02.usace.army.mil))